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New CIA Head a Career Intelligence Staffer

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A Robert M. Gates, the newly chosen chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, is a youthful and energetic expert on the Soviet Union who as deputy CIA director has concentrated on the information-gathering needs of the future.

At 43, Gates has more than 20 years' experience in national security, having joined the CIA in 1966 before serving in the White House National Security Council under three presidents.

Named deputy director of the CIA last April, Gates has been running the agency during the illness of William J. Casey. Gates was named Casey's successor Monday, although the Senate must still confirm him for that post.

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P Since returning to the CIA in 1980, Gates has thrown himself into extending the range of analysis done by the agency, defining major areas of concern and investigation and looking to the needs of the future, John Ranelagh reported in his book, "The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA." At congressional hearings last summer, Sen Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., characterized Gates as "an extremely professional member of our intelligence community." During those hearings, Gates defended the CIA's use of covert activities and vowed to work to curtail leaks of information to the news media.

Covert actions, he said, are "an appropriate instrument of foreign policy, as long as it is taken within a broader context." Questioned about news leaks, Gates told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he thought they resulted from "lack of discipline" by people with access to sensitive information.

He declined to discuss specific instances of either leaks or covert actions, however.

In the case of large scale paramilitary activities, it is difficult to keep American involvement secret, Gates acknowledged. But, he added, even when a program becomes widely known, official involvement can still be denied and that provides "a fig leaf" for the United States in international circles.

In his book, Ranelagh quoted colleagues as saying that took on the deputy's job "with all of Casey's energy plus a little bit more." Gates, Ranelagh wrote, has focused on a series of areas he considers to be the crucial trends of the future.

These include new methods of communicating with policymakers, increasing difficulty in obtaining information on other nations, problems recruiting enough people who meet the agency's standards, changing relations with Congress, increasing use of intelligence information for public education, a dramatic increase in the types of information that must be collected and a growing emphasis on preparing for the future.

As deputy CIA director, Gates has also served as chairman of the National Intelligence Council, directing the preparation of national intelligence estimates that are put together in cooperation by the various national security agencies.

Gates' service at the CIA was interrupted for six years, when he served on the staff of the National Security Council from 1974 to 1980 under Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter.

Gates, who holds a doctorate in Soviet history from Georgetown University, became the CIA's intelligence officer for Soviet affairs for two years after returning to the agency.

In 1982 he was named deputy director for intelligence, in charge of analytical studies.

During his first years at the CIA, Gates served as a specialist in strategic arms limitation issues, advising officials during the negotiations of the 1970s.

A native of Kansas, he is married and has two children.